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THE GROWING NAVAL POWER OF JAPAN.

BY ARCHIBALD S. HURD.

THE navy of Japan is the child of Great Britain; the ships were built mainly in England, and most of the officers and men have been trained either in British men-of-war, or in colleges and schools founded and for many years controlled by British naval officers. As late as ten years ago, a British officer was retained as naval adviser to the Japanese Government. It is, therefore, appropriate that the two forces should be bound in a close alliance during these years when the outlook in the Far East becomes intermittently threatening. The fleet which flies the ensign of the Rising Sun—"Dai Nippon," as the people call their kingdom, means "the great land on which the sun first rises"—is linked to the fleet of an empire on which the sun never sets.

The progress of Japan is one of the marvels of the last half century. A story is still told of the first steam-vessel possessed by the Japanese. It was presented to the Emperor in 1858 by Queen Victoria, and was a small steam-yacht, the "Empress."*

It is said that the new owners were rather impatient of instruction in the methods of working their first steamship, and dispensed too soon with their teachers, a few British bluejackets. They set out bravely, having successfully learned how to start and steer the little ship; but, when they wanted to stop, they discovered that they had forgotten how this desirable operation was performed. Consequently, they had to steam round and round the Gulf of Yeddo until the fires died down and there was

* Admiral Kamimura, during a recent visit to Sydney recalled the interesting fact that one of the young officers of the "Empress," when the vessel was handed over to the Japanese, was the present Governor of New South Wales, Admiral Sir Harry Rawson. This ship, he added, was the beginning of the Japanese navy, and, however great and powerful that navy might become in the future, the Japanese people would always remember its British origin with pride and gratitude.

no steam to drive the engines. Then the yacht was tugged home.

Since these early years, Japan has swiftly emerged out of the almost barbaric darkness in which she hid herself until as late as 1868, the year of the revolution against the despotic Shoguns; but it was not until 1899 that the whole country was thrown open freely to foreigners. In the past quarter of a century the Japanese have been bending themselves, with wonderful determination, to the task of occidentalizing their institutions, their methods of defence and government and education, and now the Empire flourishes under a constitutional monarchy, supported by two Diets, (the lower one democratic), and has a system of compulsory education, with well-equipped universities, and no fewer than forty-eight libraries, while the army and navy have shown their mettle in the struggle with China, and, later, in association with the troops and sailors of the great Western nations during the Chinese troubles of 1900.

In no department of the state has British influence been stronger than in the navy. Englishmen in the early days organized and trained the officers and men, and the ships have been built almost entirely by English labor. Japan had no navy a quarter of a century ago; to-day her fleet is one of the dominating factors in the Far East. The rise of Japan in naval power has no parallel in history, and this year the Emperor must have been a proud ruler as he passed down the review lines of his assembled men-of-war, which include some of the finest and most powerful ships in the fleets of the world.

The fighting fleet nominally dates from about 1877 (though a small ship had been purchased a short time before from the United States), when Samuda's old yard on the Thames built the earliest ironclad, "*Fuso*," from the design of Sir Edward Reed. For several years the movement towards the construction of a large fleet made little progress, though in that time the foundation was being laid for the great expansion of the past ten years. The Japanese understood that an adequate organization and a system of training for officers and men were the first essentials. Thirty years ago, with the consent of the British Admiralty, Japanese officers were undergoing instruction at the gunnery and torpedo-schools at Portsmouth, and gaining sea experience with the British squadrons; and down to quite recent years the aspiring

officers of the Japanese navy were to be met with on British ships. Meantime, in Japan itself training establishments were being founded, and for this work the Japanese authorities, having a firm belief in English methods, borrowed officers from the British Admiralty to carry out the work of organization. The present Vice-Admiral Sir Archibald Douglas, now in command of the British North-American Squadron, was the commander of the naval mission sent to Japan in the seventies to instruct the fleet of that country, and afterwards he became Director of the Imperial Naval College at Tokio. Another officer who assisted in the work, Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, V.C., is now in command of the British home-fleet; while, as late as 1893, Japan retained the services of Admiral J. Ingles as naval adviser. Under these auspices, the foundation was laid of the naval power of this regenerated kingdom.

For many years the Japanese people had little faith in their fleet; they regarded it as an aristocratic institution and grudged the money spent on ships. This was the state of affairs as late as the outbreak of war with China. In this struggle the Japanese navy won with ease, against the more powerful fleet of China. Japan had few vessels of much fighting value, and not a single modern armored ship. She achieved victory by the daring, resourcefulness, and judgment of the officers, and the splendid devotion to duty of the crews.

The world rang with stories of the way in which the Japanese had fought, and these achievements planted in the breasts of the Japanese people a pride not felt before in the marine forces of the island-kingdom. The events which occurred at the time of the signing of the treaty of peace at Shimonoseki fired the nation, newly awakened to the meaning of sea-power, with a determination to build and equip a fleet capable of meeting any probable combination of enemies. While Japan was dictating terms to China, Russia, Germany, and France stepped in between the two parties, and declared that, in the interest of the integrity of China, Japan could not be allowed to hold Port Arthur which she had captured. Neither Great Britain nor the United States made effective protest against this interference. The victor had to bow in face of superior force, and within a short period had the mortification of seeing Russian soldiers take over the barracks built during Japanese occupation of Port Arthur, and the sway

of the Muscovite Power slowly but surely spread over the whole province of Manchuria. This sequence of events was sufficient to rouse the whole people to a resolve to build a fleet which should be able not only to defeat China again, if need be, but to hold its own against any probable European enemy.

As soon as the war was over, the Japanese Government, which had two battle-ships already under construction, decided to put in hand a great ship-building programme, which was to occupy British workmen for several years, for all the battle-ships and most of the cruisers and torpedo craft were ordered from England. The scheme was a gigantic one for a small and commercially backward country like Japan, for Japan is poor. It included no fewer than four first-class battle-ships, and, in addition to smaller craft, six first-class cruisers, so heavily armored and carrying so many big guns as to be battle-ships in all but name.

Out of the spoils of her fight—for Japan received a heavy indemnity from China—the victorious navy has been rebuilt, while the personnel has been doubled. Now the programme which was outlined at the conclusion of hostilities has been completed, and this year the Emperor—now a constitutional monarch, but the head of his navy as is the German Emperor of the German fleet—has had the pride of reviewing his new fleet. So great an expansion in so short a period is unexampled in the history of modern navies, for not even Germany's growth is comparable to that of Japan, when their relative wealth, development, and industrial resources are borne in mind. At the time of the war with China, the whole fleet of Japan displaced only about 30,000 tons; to-day, the aggregate displacement is over 250,000 tons.*

While this armada has been in process of creation, other Powers have been adding to their naval strength in the Far East. Russia has hurried from Europe practically every new ship as it has been finished, while France also maintains a more powerful squadron adjacent to Chinese waters than she did. In view of developments near their doors, the Japanese people decided last

* The navy of Japan, at the present time, consists of: 6 first-class battle-ships, 1 second-class battle-ship, 2 coast-defence vessels (armored ships which cannot fight at a distance from a base), 6 armored cruisers of the first class, 10 protected cruisers of the second class (with 2 building), 8 protected cruisers of the third class (with 1 building), 9 unprotected cruisers, 1 torpedo vessel, 17 torpedo-boat destroyers (with 2 more building), and 67 torpedo-boats (with 18 others in process of construction).

autumn that the time had come to augment their fleet still further. Some wrangling occurred as to the means by which the new ships should be paid for, out of fresh taxation or loans, but backed up by the popular demand for a greater navy, politicians did not long delay in settling their differences; and now it has been agreed to raise a loan with which to carry out another big programme, the construction of the ships being spread over a period of six years. The scheme has been framed to neutralize the additions which, it is understood, Russia and France will make to their forces in the Far East in the near future. The Japanese people have not forgotten Port Arthur over which the Russian flag flies, and they are determined that they will not again be robbed without making a determined stand. Moreover, Japan's teeming population of upwards of 40,000,000 requires an outlet, and colonies are among the necessities of the near future.

While the array of ships which have been built in less than ten years is impressive, ships without men adequately trained to answer to the needs of the highly complicated mechanical vessels of to-day, and without officers capable of commanding, thinking and planning, are mere dangerous toys. Any nation might be proud of the personnel of the Japanese fleet; officers and men are splendid. During the visits to Europe of ships flying the brilliant ensign of the Rising Sun, it has been possible to form some estimate of the crews. Mrs. Bishop, the traveller, summed up the race as "vehemently patriotic, civilized, independent, educated, ambitious, free, persevering, tenacious, possessing a singular secretiveness and powers of assimilation." These are essentially the qualities that impress any visitor who spends any considerable time on board any of the Japanese men-of-war, which the officers navigate with such consummate skill. They keep their vessels as spotlessly clean as British or American ships-of-war; than this no higher praise can be paid. But in the men of the fleet one also notices some remnant of the savage fighting qualities which have made these proud little people the dominant military factor among Far Eastern nations.

The Japanese are sailors by instinct. They are secured by conscription and do not volunteer for service, as is the case in England. Japan has a fishing population of about two million men, and from this section of the community she draws her best seamen, men of intelligence, resource, and sea-lore, and capable

of quickly acquiring sufficient mechanical skill to enable them to control the complex mechanism of their modern men-of-war with complete success. They desire no pampering and they can live on the simplest food and sleep anywhere; but in their new ships they have more air and, in some respects, greater comforts than are to be found on many, if not most, British men-of-war. These sailors of the Far East take things very much as they find them, with a stoical calm. They face danger with much the same spirit with which they take their pleasure; and, in spite of the rapid strides which civilization has made in their country, their luxuries are few and they are contented and happy. They are devoted to simple sports, to fencing, and to acting; no one can ever forget the dramatic entertainments on board Japanese men-of-war who has been privileged to witness them. Nor does the memory soon become dim of one of these ships when decked out in gala dress, with chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms, and other blooms typical of Japan enlivening the grim aspect of the decks. The men are adepts in the making of imitation paper flowers, which so closely resemble the handiwork of nature that at a casual glance one hardly notices the deception.

On ordinary occasions, there is little on board a Japanese vessel to differentiate it from a British or American ship. The Admiral's quarters on board one of the flagships are not unlike such an apartment as Lord Charles Beresford has in the Channel Fleet, except for the complete outfit of ancient and beautifully wrought Japanese armor that stands against one wall, like some ghost of the not far-distant time when these wonderful people had still to grip civilization and acquire all it had to give in power and culture. And the officers are as like British officers in their cordial good humor as one could wish, open-hearted, easily amused, and polite to every English bore who afflicts them because they assume that it is their place, when visiting English harbors, to suffer the bore willingly since they are guests. They have been pupils, learning all worth knowing that the Western world had to teach, but they have maintained a dignity of manner which has won admiration.

It is a common belief that the Japanese have the imitative faculty, but that they are lacking in initiative. This is one of those erroneous opinions which, hastily formed, time will serve to correct. There is already sufficient evidence to show that these

people, who have proved such apt students of Western methods, will soon be able to stand absolutely alone, and to carry on their developments with a calm belief in their powers and a consciousness of having grasped the rudiments of every branch of knowledge. They have learnt as children, almost by rote, and then worked out the meaning of the knowledge they have acquired. No one acquainted with the Japanese can fail to be struck with their all-round capacity, as evidenced in many branches of industry, and not least in the industry of manufacturing instruments of war for use afloat and ashore. It has been already stated that most of the ships of their new fleet were designed and built in Great Britain; and, to propitiate other Powers, a proportion of orders, a small one, was given to countries of Continental Europe. Now the time is coming when Japan will be able to throw off the assistance of the Western world, politely, but finally. Already her arsenals have progressed so far that they are capable of building protected cruisers and torpedo craft, destroyers as well as torpedo-boats. Soon the gun-factory and armor-plate factory, now being established, will be ready to begin work; and then the day will have dawned when Japan will bid farewell to all those Europeans, especially Englishmen, who have helped her to acquire all the expensive accessories of a Great Power with a voice in the councils of the world.

Japan closely resembles Great Britain. Both countries consist of a group of islands with almost similar area and population, and Japan was not slow to see that the force of circumstance which had led Great Britain to rely for trade on a great mercantile marine, and for defence mainly on her fleet, applied in her own case with almost equal urgency. Consequently, Japan has been gradually and, of late, swiftly building up her commercial power by means of a great mercantile marine, which is now seen passing to and fro, East and West, and her fighting strength by means of a navy which promises, in the future, to attain a supremacy in the Far East almost as indisputable, all factors considered, as the supremacy of Great Britain in the Far West. The latest movement in favor of a yet greater war-fleet is one of the most significant facts in the ever-changing scene in Chinese and Korean waters. Year by year the expenditure of Japan on her naval defence is growing; but she has far to go before she can be said to be devoting to her fleet as much proportionately as

Great Britain spends on hers. Japan still spends eighty per cent. more on her army than upon her navy. It will be interesting to note whether this latest recruit to the concert of the Great Powers will attempt the rôle of Germany, France, and Russia, and endeavor to maintain a huge army—her army now numbers 632,000 officers and men—as well as a navy capable of dominating adjacent waters, in spite of the development of Russian ambitions and because of them; or whether she will follow the example of Great Britain and the United States, and rest satisfied with a comparatively small regular army and concentrate her attention on the fleet. It is probable that a nation so dominated by patriotism could rely, to some extent, successfully upon a volunteer force; but it is doubtful if a citizen army, even stiffened by regulars, could meet such an emergency as Japan may have to face. The question is one which may arise in the future, as the country develops industrially and the pressure of military service becomes more irksome, the avenues for labor are widened, and the necessary training for commerce and manufacture is more exacting. It is a problem which is leading European Powers to shorten the term of service in the interests of trade and of social order, for all democracies hate forced service. Japan is still young as a war-Power and as a commercial nation, and such a problem may not confront her for some years.

Japan has gone far. With her great resources, with her industrious, patriotic, quick-witted and adventurous population, she is destined to go yet farther, and as her interests, trade and territorial, spread beyond her group of islands, her navy must undoubtedly continue to grow. As Russia despatches ships-of-war in increasing numbers to the Far East to support her diplomacy, so Japan will spend and be spent in the determination to be ready for the struggle which a large section of the people regard as inevitable. A nation with the deep-rooted love of country and the high pride which characterize the Japanese will not soon forget Port Arthur. In any struggle, unless it be legitimately in defence of the integrity of China for "the open door," Japan, of course, would stand alone, since Great Britain's treaty obligation requires her only to stand aside and see fair play—in other words, to prevent any other Power or Powers joining in the fray to the detriment of Japan.

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